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# Touring Teams Attract Close Attention

*Foreign Sports Delegations Are Often Thought to Include Intelligence Agents*

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One evening last August, Wanda Rutledge, administrative director of the United States Baseball Federation, was summoned to an unlikely meeting at the New York Yankees' minor league club office in Albany, N.Y. Rutledge was in Albany for the World Junior Baseball Championships and, as she stepped inside the Yankees office, she was introduced to Harry La Cast, a special agent for the FBI. "He asked if he could ask me a few questions," Rutledge said. "He showed me his identification, and I said, 'Sure.'"

In the meeting that followed, Rutledge said the FBI agent asked her some rather unusual questions. "He asked me, 'Is the umpire that the Cuban team brought along really an umpire? . . . Is the Cuban doctor a real doctor? . . . Is the Cuban journalist really a journalist?'" Rutledge recalled. Also, she said, the agent inquired about Mario Balaz, chief of the Cuban delegation. "Mario had been walking back and forth behind the backstop during the game that was going on while we talked," Rutledge said. "So the FBI man says, 'Is he nervous? Does he know I'm here?'"

Rutledge said La Cast told her that at least one nonplaying member of the Cuban baseball delegation was a suspected intelligence agent. "He said, 'We have reason to believe there may be somebody in this party who shouldn't be here,'" Rutledge recalled.

"He mentioned a couple of guys that they kind of would like to watch," said Jack Tracz, a tournament official who was also interviewed by La Cast. "Looking at the names in the Cuban delegation, he came to one name and said, 'That's one of the three or four names that *this* fellow has used.'"

The FBI's interest in sports delegations that visit the United States from Soviet bloc nations is not unusual, U.S. government officials said in interviews with The Washington Post.

"It's fairly common—if their delegation is large enough—for the Soviets to put intelligence agents in their sports delegations," said a senior U.S. government official with extensive knowledge of Soviet intelligence matters. "It's always the support people who are doing the intelligence—the supposed trainers and coaches and doctors. It's not the athletes."

The official, who asked not to be identified, said it's a given that the FBI has been monitoring the activities of the three Soviet hockey delegations that have been touring the United States since last month. One club, Moscow Dynamo, which played Monday night in Boston and will conclude its North American tour tonight in Buffalo, is sponsored by the KGB.

Kenneth Sidman, head of the Boston chapter of the Jewish Defense League, asked the Bruins last month to cancel the game against Dynamo in Boston Garden because he said the Dynamo team was composed of Soviet police officers.

No member of the Soviet embassy here was available to comment on the composition of the Dynamo team.

A few minutes after the Soviet team arrived at Boston Garden Monday night, police defused a time bomb in a trash barrel inside the main entrance to the arena. Sidman condemned the planting of the bomb.

But a State Department official said there is

no evidence that any members of the three delegations, which also include the Central Red Army and junior national hockey clubs, are intelligence agents. Each member of each delegation was given a "national security check" by the State Department and "the U.S. intelligence community," the official said, and no visas were denied.

Most of the KGB operatives who traveled to the United States with sports delegations in the past decade were not identified as such until after they had left this country, the senior government official told The Post.

"We learned about them from different sources," the official said. "For example, an American businessman will travel to Eastern Europe or the Soviet Union, and while he's over there he'll meet some people (KGB agents) who may not try to recruit him, but they'll sound him out. Later, who shows up on the businessman's doorstep in the U.S. but some guy who's bringing greetings from the 'friends' whom the businessman had met in Eastern Europe. And the guy on the doorstep turns out to be a trainer of somebody from one of the visiting Soviet teams."

The U.S. official said that visiting Soviet agents generally seek technological information and equipment that could also be obtained by Soviet operatives who are residing in the United States. (FBI Director William H. Webster estimated recently that about 2,500 Soviet diplomatic and commercial officials are based in the United States and, of these, about one-third "are affiliated with intelligence services.")

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However, the visiting agents often have easier access to areas of the United States that are off-limits to the U.S.-based Soviets, the official said. "It's less obvious for the Soviets to use people from, say, a visiting sports or scientific team than sending someone out from the embassy in Washington," he said. "If you're a Soviet KGB man at the embassy and you want to contact somebody in Kansas City, you have to ask State Department permission and find a cover reason to go to Kansas City. But if you can find a sports team that's coming to Kansas City, you may say, 'Well, that's an easier way to do it. I'll put my man in that delegation.'"

U.S. sports officials interviewed by The Post said they generally assumed that visiting teams from communist nations are chaperoned by intelligence officers.

"We always suspected—always—that in any of those delegations there was one KGB type involved," said Bob Surkein, former president of the AAU Boxing Committee. "You could almost pick him out because the guy appeared non-athletic. He didn't know what the hell he was talking about, as far as boxing. I felt that his main purpose was to make... sure that none of his country's athletes defected."

"I could not identify a single (intelligence agent) conclusively or definitely," said Brooks Johnson, who coached the 1984 U.S. Olympic women's track and field team, "but I think both sides use these kinds of things (tactics) to gather information."

Col. Don Hull, president of the International Amateur Boxing Federation, told The Post that he was approached during the mid-1960s by a U.S. intelligence agency.

"An intelligence official came to my house and said, 'You're well re-

ceived in Eastern Europe and so forth,' and he asked me if I'd be interested in doing something for them," recalled Hull, who was then national director of the AAU. "I had to tell them flat-out 'no,' that I wanted no part of it. I admitted to them that if I saw something that was really important, of national security value, that I would, as any good American, report it. But I didn't want to use my position as an international sports official to do any espionage. And they didn't pressure me."

On another occasion, Hull said he was visited at his home in New Jersey by FBI agents who were seeking information about a high-ranking official at the Soviet mission to the United Nations.

"A diplomat at the Soviet mission was a sportsman and he knew my sports background and he made a point to meet me," Hull said. "We used to do a lot of things together. I took him to the New York Athletic Club and taught him to bowl. He became a pretty good bowler. He liked to say, 'I'm the bowling champion of the Soviet Union because I'm the *only* Soviet who ever learned to bowl.' He was a great guy. He was on the wrong side of the fence but a guy you liked anyhow."

"When they visited my house, the FBI started by saying, 'Well, do you know his habits, what he drinks, if he likes girls?' You know, the usual dossier they like to prepare on a guy. It all adds up, as you know. Piece by piece, they put together something that can be useful. I said, 'Hey, guys, I don't want any part of it.'"

Speaking of the sports officials he has met from communist countries, Hull added, "You get to know these guys personally. What the hell? They're just like you and me."

Rutledge, the U.S. amateur baseball official, said she couldn't offer much help to La Cast when he visited her last August in Albany.

As for whether the Cuban umpire was really an umpire, Rutledge said: "I told the FBI man that the umpire had just officiated four games and evidently he knew how to umpire, regardless of what *else* he knew how to do."

And the doctor? "I told the agent that the doctor was doing all the basic things that a trainer would do. He has a little medical kit and everyone seemed happy with him."

And the journalist? "I said, 'Well, he's upstairs in the press box taking down statistics. Having been a journalist I would say he's doing all the proper things.'"

And the delegation leader who had been walking behind the backstop? Rutledge laughed. "I told the agent, 'The man was just walking around to see his ballplayers. He is not engaged in any activities that are unusual at a baseball park.'"

An FBI spokesman said he could not confirm any investigation of the Cubans.